

The Implication of Communication Axioms within Various Perspectives of Methodology and Research

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Abstract

It is very clear that communication axioms implied to theories of communication. A good theory usually gives the implication to the research methodology directly or indirectly. Through communication axioms, we understand that these formulations are generated from the discursive practices of community within the communication field conducted by the scholars. Here it is to say that each theory that was generated can not be separated from the historical perspectives. By giving the key foundation of communication axioms, this paper was meant to trigger many attempts in exploring communication in detail and more comprehensively.

Keywords: communication axiom, research methodology, theory of communication

Introduction

Whoever concerns to communication science knows that communication field is very vast, broad and touching directly or indirectly in our life. Communication is one of the most pervasive, important and complex aspects of human life. Our daily life are strongly affected by our own communication with others as well as by messages from people we do not even know, people both living and dead, and communication from near and far. Because communication is so vital to our life, it deserves our careful attention (Littlejohn, 2002).

There are broad areas for communication definition. One suggests that communication can be formulated as: Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect. This formula was expressed by Harold D Lasswell when he was asked about communication. This formula shows us that communication consist of some elements in reflecting of communication process. The elements of communication: communicator, message, channel, audience, effect, and feedback are always cited to illustrate the process of communication- face to face communication, group communication,

organization and mass communication. It is also used to describe the process of mass communication in the general. Many frequently perceive that mass media is powerful affecting the attitudes and behavior of society. This views can not be reduced from these elements of communication especially cause and effect of communication.

The others said that communication is problem between sender and receiver. It is the problem in which how the message can be transmitted to the receiver accurately. Philosophically, many called it as transmission regime. In the history of communication, Everett M. Rogers (1998) said that one of prominent figures who formulated transmission regimes was Claude E Shannon. It can be said that Shannon was a successful figure in formulating communication as mechanical and electricity so we enjoy his thought when communication related to the technology. His findings have been changing the pattern of communication radically and revolutionary when it applied in the communication technology. Internet and multimedia technology are examples for indicating this revolutionary that Shannon who had

been done as the best contribution for developing communication field.

We can find else that communication is defined as: the problem of meaning. In one of communication perspectives, meaning is the essential. Communication without meaning is useless and empty. In the broad areas of communication, we know some theories of communication have specific way to focus to communication meaning, for instances symbolic interaction, language game, semiotic, and phenomenology, as well as hermeneutic.

We also know that many experts defined communication as: we can't not communicate or vice versa. It means that as human being, we can not avoid and prevent communication. It is difficult to imagine what it will happen in our social life without communication. Everywhere, everyone and every situation, we must communicate even quite. In short, we can identify that communication perspectives have different expressions in formulating what communications are.

It is my concern to show that how to and the way we formulate the communication shall affect the types of methodology and research. As long as we know that these efforts had been done, for instances Frank E.X Dance (1970), Theodore Clevenger (1991), Peter A. Andersen (1991), Michael T Motley (1990) and; Bradac and Bower (1982).

I want to state here that actually what I intend to discuss here was classic and one may be telling it as out of date of matters. But according to my observation, these themes have been never out of date even in the related to the contemporary issues what we are facing now. We are easy finding out the implication of these axioms appearing in the research practices of communication either done by

professionals, practitioners or academicians. The way we formulate the communication implies to the theoretical and methodological framework. I stress here that, a theory, methodology and definition of communication has a causal-effect connection.

It is my reason why I have been still interesting to explore the communication axioms that had been ever explained in detail during 1982s and conducted by Bradac and Bower. Both have convinced us and took a chance in the discursive community of communication that these axioms are useful to observe the implications in the theories, approaches, methodologies, as well as paradigms. Thus contextually, communication axioms will justify for scholars when they conducted the investigation in the forms of social problems especially in which one theoretical and methodological legitimate they will choose and operate in within their concerns.

The Seven Pairs of Communication Axioms

As mentioned above, Dance and Larson pointed out that the scholars have the specific ways in formulating and defining the communication. Many perspectives exist and compete as well as contradict. One theory can be enlarged intensively or extensively, but the other hand, it can also contradict. Based on 126 definitions of communication that successful gathered by Dance and Larson, it inspired and interfered the others in the discursive community of communication. Peter Anderson and Michael Motley for examples, tried to conceive communication by observing the pattern of behavior. One of them else has been formulated by Bower and Bradac in searching general principles in the communication. Axioms can be articulated as truth or general principle of communication. It depicts the essence of communication that it can be

observed. Their formula was known as the seven pairs of axioms in communication.

If we notice, we soon shall know that these axioms were constructed as a pair. Interestingly, a pair of axioms that Bradac and Bower proposed contains contradiction statement that can not be separated. In the credible, both statements are true. Uniqueness of these axioms, one side indicating how Bradac and Bower were so smart, the other side, it indicated the communication broadly. They verified the characteristic of communication accurately and successful.

Communication as Transmission and Reception Information Versus Communication as Generation of Meaning

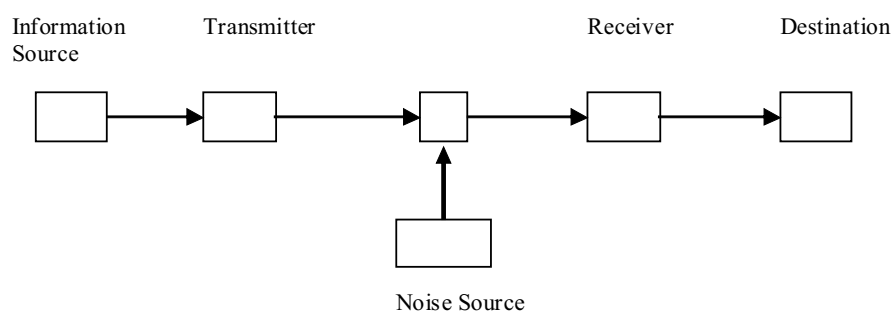
The first premise stated that communication is transmission and reception information. This axiom describe that communication is the best illustrating to how the message can be successful transmitted to the receiver accurately. It ignores the meaning as the essential of communication that usually involved in every process of communication. The core problem in this axiom lies in relation between transmission and reception information. This thought articulated and stressed mechanically processing in communication. It considered that a message is noticed as the physical

entity where this can be replaced from a place to another place accurately. From this view, we can identify the crucial elements of communication process e.g. sender, message, transmitter, encoder, decoder, and receiver.

It should be known that terms of encoder, decoder, transmitter etc. are terms that are usually used in the electricity and engineering. As mentioned above precisely, this thought was formulated by Shannon. Although this thought derive from technical and engineering, process that is identified then was adopted in the communication studies. This is very influence for communication studies for a period, therefore many called this era as transmission regime.

In the line to the Shannon model of communication, Warren Weaver suggested that the model does not deal with emotions or attitudes, but just strictly cognitive content and effect in which receiver decodes a signal in a similar way to that in which it was encoded by the source. Warren then in response to Shannon model of communication identified three levels of communication problem. First, level A that it identifies how the symbols of communication can accurately be transmitted. It is the technical problem. Second, level B that it

The Shannon model of Communication



identified to how the transmitted symbols precisely do to convey the desired meaning. It called as the semantic problem. And finally, level C- how effectively the received meaning affects conduct in the desired way (the effectiveness or behavioral problem).

On the other hand, the second premise of the axiom of communication serves as opposite to the first premise. This axiom explains that communication is generation of meaning. From this view, we understand that communication is not only creating of meaning, but also producing and reproducing of meaning. Meaning can do nothing for one, but induce to do something for another individual. Meaning can be contextually lost but at the same time it can be changed and interchange in the many forms of interactions. One of information types can produce thousands of meaning and conclusion.

Theories of human communication for instances symbolic interaction, language game, phenomenology and hermeneutic can be classified to this axiom. Besides what we mentioned all at under this axiom, each of theory conceives a meaning differently. But it is an evident that meaning occupies at the central of communication.

Communication as Individual Behavior Versus Communication as the Relationship Among Behavior of Interacting Individual

The premise of communication is individual behavior gives us understanding that communication intertwined to psychology that has the main focus of study on the behavior. As the discipline, psychology analyzed the forms of behavior, information processing and reception in individual cognition, as well as attitudes. It is interesting to scrutinize this crossed line of

discipline and reconsider that each discipline has been developing and maturing. Each discipline has been influenced through interaction among disciplines like sociology, politics, linguistic and so on. Communication itself was called as oases where several disciplines took and gave in its own theories and approaches. Later, it is more interesting to question how we do to define that all of behavior is communication. Which one behavior can be called communication and which one behavior can be called not communication.

For Michael Motley, communication should be limited to messages that are intentionally directed to other individuals and received by them. While, Peter Anderson promoted that communication should include any behaviors that are meaningful to receiver in any way, whether intended or not (Littlejohn, 2002: 8-9). Relation communication as intentional and unintentional behavior for several times has been debating for theorists in determining the communication or not.

On the contrary, the second premise claims that communication is relationship among behavior of interacting individual. It seems negating the first premise that stated communication is individual behavior. This axiom expressed that behavior can not be seen autonomous and separated from another behavior. Individual interaction justify that communication can not be reduced and limited as stimuli– response relation. Relationship involved the complex relations such as mutual understanding, values, expectations, cooperation, honesty, trust and respect. This axiom paid the more attention to the relationship and interaction determinant in communication. Without relationship and interaction, communication is not existed.

Human Communication as Unique Versus Human Communication as A Form of Animal Communication

Many suggested that communication is a kind of privileges for human being which differed from any kind of animals. Human being is solely animal using of symbols and making it into the system comprehensively for social interaction. Language is the most important system of symbols. By language, man reflects, selects and represents of reality. This uniqueness distinguished the status and position of human being in his environment in comparison with other animals. By communication, human transferred his knowledge, values, beliefs, power, and loves. They express passion and emotion through communication. These expression, action, feeling and expectation could not be done by animal except human being.

The usage and characteristic of communication determined the characteristics of human being either as political, social, and rational animal. Burke argued that man is the symbol using animal. At the least, here it is the substantial message that will be conveyed which displayed in the axioms: Human communication is unique. Human being has the special position, unique, odd, and credible in reflecting his own the capacities. But it is one side that argued that communication is a kind of privilege for human being.

The other perspectives still remain. Communication is not only privilege for human being but communication can be traced for any kind of animals. Each stratum of animal either mammal or vertebrate has capacity to express his emotion and feeling. Therefore, some experts have been giving attention to explore the capacity of dolphin and chimpanzee in communicating for its feeling and emotion. They believe that animals in general like

chimpanzee and dolphin have ability to communicate. It is not only privileges for human being.

Communication as Process Versus Communication as Static

David K Berlo argued that communication is process. In this notion, process has two dimensions. First communication involved interactions among variables in the system. The system itself has some characteristics that illustrate this process. One component with other component in the system has a mutual relationship. One component changes will result another component. System tends to be homeostasis in searching the new equilibrium. We can find theories of communication that based these assumptions, for instance system theory and information theory.

Second, there is a transactional involvement among elements of the system. Because communication is process, it is difficult to determine which one is being of the starting point or which one is being of the end in that process. The important thing is that meaning is dynamics and constantly changing.

Thoughts that communication is static seem to be odd. How it could be explained that communication is static. Isn't it dynamics and changing constantly? As mentioned that communication has multifaceted of meaning. Talking this axiom and making it clear, we must look for the linguistics perspective. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that language as the important tool for human communication. According to Saussure, study of language can be divided to langue and parole. Langue has characteristic stable and synchronic, meaning that it changed very little over time. While parole was defined as the actual use of language, thus it has characteristics diachronic and

has high contextual. Meaning that it changed constantly from situation to situation. Therefore, besides the dynamics dimension, communication also has static dimension. Grammatical and structuralism of language are frequently believed as static. On the contrary, discourse frequently is seen as parole.

Communication as Contextualized Versus Communication as Noncontextualized.

According to Watzlawick (1967), a message informed the event and instruction that is pointed out by relational definition. Vocational took place in the situation and was judged in this situation. It could be right or wrong. According to Bradac and Bower, at the least there are two contextual forces that influenced the communication process. First, communicator contextual that consist of styles, delivery, and objectives. Second, situational context involved social roles, territory boundaries and opportunities. Rules of meaning and action always operate within context or frame of reference for interpreting and acting.

One context is always embedded within another so that each context is itself part of a bigger. Studies that focused communication context can be found any types of cultural. Context is very important when we talk about cultural and communication. Interaction between two cultural frequently make conflict. Prejudices, conflict, even war can appear because we misunderstand to what actually meaning to suppose. Conflict also tends to take place, when Western interacts to Eastern. Western expresses his interest more open than Eastern

The opposite of this axiom is: Communication is non-contextualized. Argument which stated that communication is non-contextualized conceived that any signals

that released by any biological animals producing the same responses from situation to situation. Situational context does not affect the types of response. How situation we have, will not affect nuances of communication. This process bring about static and mechanistically.

Human Beings Cannot not Communicate Versus Human Beings Can Not Communicate.

All forms of behavior that is perceived and produced the meaning can be called as communication. Axiom human being cannot not communicate clearly reflected receiver oriented. It neglected the intention of communicator as one factor that determined this process. Watzlawick (1962) argued that it is exist or not, if it is perceived and arises the meaning, we can call it as communication. On the other hand, axiom human beings can not communicate considered the intentions as the factor in determining communication. The intention is the criteria for communication. Without the intention, a form of behavior can not be called communication. These facts warn us that actually communicating to others is not easy. We have ever experienced failed to communicate. What we intend to communicate is not merely successful and resulting in accordance with our wishes.

Communication as Ubiquitous and Powerful Force In Society Versus Communication as One Among Forces in Society and A Relatively Weak One

The proof tells us that communication formed changed and reformed individual and society. It is very easy to find it that communication is powerful. Some theories that concerned to mass media for instances, frequently assumed that it is powerful influencing the society. Mass media that is

functioned for democratization, power and politics are actually reflects this assumption.

On the contrary, some the scholars believe that it is not the entirely true that communication is powerful. They convinced that communication is only one among forces and a relatively weak one. Therefore, we also see that argument and assumption for media powerful are revised. They think that each person has capacities and capabilities for selecting and accepting as well as rejecting a kind of information he needs.

Communication Axioms, Theories and Research Methodology

According to me it is very clear that communication axioms implied to theories of communication. A good theory usually gives the implication to research methodology directly or indirectly. If we observe the seven pairs of communication axioms, we soon understand that these formulations are generated from the discursive practices of community in the communication field conducted by the scholars. Each has specific way in determining communication. One side defines communication as a process, the other sides define communication as transactional and interaction. I want to say that each theory that was generated can not be separated from the historical perspective.

For example, the axiom of communication is transmission and reception information can be traced through several thoughts that chaired by Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver. Under this umbrella, we can identify some theories that closed to the axiom, for instances: The Information Theory, System Theory and Cybernetic. When we observe in the deeper to those theories, we know that those have relevance to positivism approaches. Information theory, system theory and cybernetic have been

developing in mechanic and technical perspectives. Basic elements of these thoughts then was adopted and adapted to communication field. In these perspectives, it is very difficult and hard to catch the meaning. Warren had warned that the information theory did not concern to the semantic problem or effect problem, but it concerned to the technical problem. Problem of meaning is not here and not relevant.

Instead study of meaning can be found in any tradition of communication. For those who study the semiotic, they know that problem of meaning can be found there. We know that definition of semiotic is a relationship among a sign, an object and a meaning. This tradition also develops in maturing. Many prominent figures postulated their thought, even some position of these thought is mapped for instance structuralism and post structuralism. Study of meaning also can be found in the Symbolic Interaction. George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer argued that meaning can be found in the interaction. Both argued that people understand their experience through the meanings found in the symbols of their primary groups and language is an essential part of social life. Meanings are created and maintained in social interaction.

Some theories that have the significant to the axiom: Communication is generations of meaning are hermeneutics, phenomenology, cultural studies, rhetorical and so on. I want we know that these theories have been developed along with the way these are applied to the research and investigation. Besides those disclose the main propositions, it also gave the foundation of research methodology. Hermeneutics, semiotics, and phenomenology can be approached through interpretive research. Some revised and reconsideration of them also are done, for instance, hermeneutics can be seen as critical hermeneutics; semiotics is not limited in

structuralism views but post structuralism; and research methodology of phenomenology is not only obtained through ethnography. Those also gave a different of unit of analysis. We find it as individual (symbolic interaction), text (semiotic and hermeneutic), and action (hermeneutic and phenomenology)

To view communication as individual behavior we must seek the foundations and principles of behavior. From this perspective, communication can be viewed as an information-based, message centered process either production or reception of information. At the least, there are three types of theories of communication that can be scrutinized. At the same time, we can observe it and how to relate the research methodology. The first involves trait explanations which focus on relatively static characteristics individual. The second focus on the behavioral explanation. These tend to focus on the types of behavior, how that behavior develops and certain behavioral are associated with other behaviors, feelings, thoughts and traits. The third involves cognitive explanations which attempt to capture mechanisms of mind.

It is a range of scope and broad to identify theories for this perspective. For example, Social and Communicative Anxiety, it seek the causes why people are afraid of communication- James McCroskey, Conversational Narcissism, it discusses the tendency to be self-absorbed in conversation- Anita Vangelisti, Mark Knapp and John Daly, Accommodation Theory, it focuses on the way people adjust their behavior when they communicate- Howard Giles, Information-Integration Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory and so on. All theories that are mentioned view communication as individual behavior. Therefore, it

commonly takes place, if the most is influenced by psychology. Many researches were conducted through stimuli-response relation, cause – effect relation and placed individual as unit of analysis of research. These issues can be expanded to level communication e.g. individual level, group level, organizational level and public.

Let us know argument that said: Communication is the relationship among behavior of interacting individual. This perspective is influenced by sociology that stress to the interaction. The interaction itself is essential of sociology. Therefore, some theories of communication that can be identified have nuances of sociology. We can observe that symbolic interaction has postulated that interaction is the most important in communication. Structuration (Anthony Gidden) also pointed out that dual relation which takes place between agent and structure is influenced by sociological thoughts. The implication that arises is the crucial. We see that the methodologically, in the theory of structuration, it can be the interpretive or critical perspectives. It is also conducted by placing individual as unit of analysis. But at the same time, unit of analysis can be macro.

Aspect of privilege which said that human communication is unique reinforced that human being is a unique species in the world. A man has capacities to express his feelings, thoughts, emotions, and behavior. In his social life, a man can actualize himself in any positions and roles. On one the hand, he is a rational of human being, and the other hand, he is political animal. Through his characteristics, man is frequently called as homo Faber and homo economicus. In any position that man has, communication is central for human being. Man is the symbol using animal. Symbol is used to reflect, select and deflect of reality. Here

the rhetorical perspective is closed to the axiom. I can mention some theories in relation to this axiom. Dramatism that is postulated by Kenneth Burke is one of examples in exploring it. Rhetorical vision that is explained in symbolic convergence theory and conducted by Ernest Bormann, John Cragan and Donald Shield is also example for this axiom. Some experts believe that fantasy theme is a factor in determining the behavior because rhetorical visions push one to do or not to do something. Rhetorical visions gives fantasy that encourage to do something even suicide.

Views which stated that communication is contextualized are also interesting. Scope of this view is broad seen through from situation to situation. We find it from communication relationship, communication in group decision making, communication and organizational networks; and communication in relation to the media. Therefore, it implies in research methodology. There are a lot of possibilities that can be used in accordance with characteristic of theory, unit of analysis and analysis level. Whatever types of research will be conducted, at the least it depends on three factors that have been mentioned above.

We also find the problem of power in communication. Terms of conflict, domination, resistance, hegemony, and ideology are concepts that related to the power. These commonly are seen through critical perspectives. It has come a long way since Karl Marx gave some exemplars of his thoughts several years ago. It is no doubtful that Marxist thinkers influenced communication studies. They share three essential features of critical perspectives. First they believe critical theories necessary to understand the lived experience of real people in context. Second, critical theories examine social condition and uncover oppressive

arrangements. And finally, critical theories make a conscious attempt to fuse theory and action. The prominent figures that echoed these schools are Adorno, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Habermas, Foucault and so on. The implication of research methodology is very clear. Because critical theories has been claiming necessary to fuse of theory and action. Result of research is projected to make better of conditions. It is not merely making interpretation but it devotes to empowering the society and uncovering the oppressive arrangements.

Conclusion

What I describe in this article actually is only highlight to encourage us to seek more comprehensible understanding of theories and research methodology. It does not pretend to fulfill all dimensions that arise from the communication axioms. Therefore, I do not explain the implication of each axiom in details. My intention is for those who want to do the investigation and research, actually bounded by how we formulate the communication. Thus, it is important to search this axiom in details later.

We know that each period always exist the contemporary issues that induce the scholars doing the research. According to me, it is only trends of the research that is influenced by the contemporary issues that take place. It is only the fashion. I believe each school in the world has trends like it. Chicago School have ever developed theory of symbolic interaction and developed two main methodologies-interpretive approach and positivist approach. Frankfurt school developed critical theories and critical research. Birmingham school developed cultural studies. Each university and mainstream of thought in the world try to respond social, political, and cultural development. Social reality produces

development and progress. It reproduces the social problem that will be responded by scholars. Social reality, theory and research affect each other to encourage the quality of life.

We should also know that research and methodology have several of form. These can be differed quantitative and qualitative; level of analysis; and paradigms. Scope of communication pointed out these conditions. Many theories are not only telling us about macro matters, but also micro element. Theory can tell individual behavior, but also tell about group, mass or society. Therefore it is very important to understand these characteristic of theories and methodologies. There is a much closed connection between characteristic of theory and characteristic of methodology.

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